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AMERICAN-FOREIGN STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS. GUIDELINES.

NATIONAL ASSN. FOR FOREIGN STUDENT AFFAIRS

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN-FOREIGN STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS IS A CYCLICAL PROCESS THAT REQUIRES PROGRAMMING TO GENERATE THE PROCESS. THE FOREIGN STUDENT ADVISOR IS PRIMARILY A CATALYST. HIS ROLE MAY ALSO INCLUDE COORDINATION, SUPPORT, CONTINUATION, EVALUATION, AND CHANGE. SUGGESTIONS RELEVANT TO THE FORMULATION OF THE GOALS OF SUCH RELATIONSHIPS ARE GIVEN. ASSESSING THE CAMPUS SITUATION AS IT RELATES TO AMERICAN-FOREIGN STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVES--(1) CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIVE ATTRIBUTES, (2) EVALUATION OF CURRENT CAMPUS PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS, AND (3) DETERMINATION OF THE LEVEL OF PROGRAMMING. SUGGESTIONS FOR ORIENTATION PROGRAMS, WORK WITH ESTABLISHED CAMPUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS, ACCEPTANCE OF LIMITATIONS, CREATION OF OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE USE OF FACILITIES ARE MADE. THE WAY IN WHICH FOREIGN STUDENTS ARE HOUSED HAS AN IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON THE CHANCES FOR ASSOCIATION. GATHERING PLACES, EATING FACILITIES, CLASSROOM AND ACADEMIC ASSOCIATIONS CAN ALSO EXPAND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTACT. SUGGESTED RULES OF THUMB ARE PRESENTED FOR ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS. THE SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF THE GRADUATE FOREIGN STUDENT ARE DISCUSSED. INTERINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION CAN FURTHER ENRICH PROGRAMS. THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FOREIGN STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICE, 1860 19TH STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20009 FOR $0.50. (PS)

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AMERICAN-FOREIGN STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

This *Guideline* deals with interaction between American and foreign students. It is a subject currently without a comprehensive library. The *Guideline* has therefore drawn primarily from reported institutional experiences and experiments and digested them into a point of view, which is necessarily its own.

From among the many different reasons that institutions admit foreign students, the two considered to be relevant to this topic are: (1) to give American students a knowledge of and feeling for other cultures and people different from themselves; (2) to give foreign students an understanding of the American culture and people in part through the experience of a campus-based education and contact with American students. Presumably, there is at least tacit agreement about the value for both American and foreign students in encountering and knowing one another, hopefully resulting in interesting and rewarding personal associations. This is assumed to be part of the overall educational goal of the institution in admitting foreign students, whether it appears in a policy statement or not.

The *Guideline* recognizes that significant differences exist on various campuses with respect to both the foreign student program and the people involved in it and therefore also assumes different starting points in the area of American-foreign student relationships. Whatever the institution's current practices in the area of American-foreign student relationships, the point of view presented may help to provide a basis for a fresh evaluation of those practices, for a re-assessment of goals and needs, and for identifying new resources, or strengthening existing resources, to meet special needs.

THE POINT OF VIEW

The development of American-foreign student relationships is a process, not a program. A relationship involves individuals in personal interaction. A "program" designed to create or promote interaction between foreign and American students is not, in itself, a relationship, nor will it automatically produce relationships. Energies, interest, and initiative are involved, as are personal needs, limitations, and individual backgrounds. Both the approach to involvement and the rate at which the process takes place are affected by these factors and vary with the individuals involved. Each person must therefore be free to set his own pace and seek his own level. No one approach to American-foreign student relationships could cover all the considerations.

The development of American-foreign student relationships is, however, a cyclical process that needs "programming" to generate the process. "Programming," by this *Guideline's* interpretation, is the creating and implementing of selected opportunities for association between American and foreign students. "Programming" can start at whatever point or level is suitable to *both* the institution's resources and facilities *and* the interests and needs of the individuals involved. A "program", then, is both a combination of measures

that are appropriate and effective for the particular campus in creating opportunities for relationships to develop and a vehicle through which interest is generated and sophistication is built. Programs and the approach to programming develop together.

THE ROLE OF THE FOREIGN STUDENT ADVISER

The *primary* role of the Foreign Student Adviser in developing American-foreign student relationships is that of the catalyst. Other dimensions of the role or functions he can serve are: (1) coordination; (2) support; (3) continuity; (4) evaluation; and (5) change.

These are roles which the Foreign Student Adviser may be in a unique position to provide. However, because the subject involves both *American* and *foreign* students, it intersects other areas of student personnel services or work. "American-foreign student relationships" is within both the professional interest and the professional responsibility of such persons as residence hall directors or counselors, student union directors, student activities coordinators, chaplains, and the Dean of Students. Their involvement can benefit their own work as much as that of the Foreign Student Adviser.

It may be possible for the Foreign Student Adviser to identify appropriate individuals and desirable for them to meet as a group in order to solicit and discuss together their views on possibilities for strengthening the development of American-foreign student relationships.* It might also be appropriate to include selected foreign and American students in such preliminary discussion and exchange of ideas. Especially important resources to include would be faculty and American students with overseas experience.

CONSIDERING GOALS

The object of having a mixed group consider goals is to interest others by seeking their help and to involve them by stimulating an exchange of ideas. Discussion might take off from two generally directed questions regarding the commonly heard complaint that the casual acquaintances which foreign students make with American students often fail to provide a basis for continuing American-foreign student relationships: (1) "Why?" and (2) "What more is expected?"

The major points to be made are: (1) that the casualness that characterizes acquaintances on an American campus does not satisfy the expectations of many foreign students, unless they have had substantial previous experience with Americans or very unusual orientation; (2) that the ease with which contacts can be established on an American campus leaves many foreign students with considerable confusion as to what is, and is not, involved; (3) that differences in expectations are a matter of culturally learned patterns or practices; (4) that the words "acquaintance," "friendship," and "relationship" probably have as many interpretations as there are cultural variations in describing them.

Determining what more is expected or desired and *could* be achieved is the main part of considering goals. The Foreign Student Adviser will need some agreement from the group as to what their common purpose will be. Two important guides for arriving at a common purpose and set of goals

*The "Advisory Committee" may be helpful in identifying resource persons. Some of the Committee membership itself might wish to be included, especially if there is obvious overlap. Cf. *Guideline* on "Academic and Personal Advising," pp. 1-2.

might be the questions: (1) how can mutual awareness and sensitivity be expanded; (2) how can the foreign and the American student be involved together in their educational and social environment.

ASSESSING THE SITUATION

Assessing the campus situation as it relates to American-foreign student relationships involves three basic steps: (1) consideration of objective attributes; (2) evaluation of current campus practices or programs and their effectiveness; (3) determination of the level at which "programming" can be implemented. Some of these matters may be appropriate to discuss with the students themselves (step #2 above); others should be reserved, perhaps, to colleagues in the administration and faculty, particularly persons in areas of related personnel services (step #1 and #3 above).

Step 1: Consideration of the Objective Attributes

THE INSTITUTION: curricula and degrees offered; private or public; religious or other affiliation; size; location (proximity to other institutions, metropolitan areas); number of faculty and administration and proportion to student body; range of student personnel services.

THE STUDENT BODY: number of students; proportion of American and foreign students; places of origin; proportions of graduates and undergraduates, married and single students, residents and commuters; relative economic status and backgrounds of student body.

THE ACADEMIC ATMOSPHERE: kinds of curricula; special study programs; specializations within faculty; area studies; cross-disciplinary studies; nature of academic tradition; degree of experimentation or freedom; degree of independent research.

THE CAMPUS LIFE: nature of student government; number and kinds of student organizations, groups, clubs, organized activities (including those for foreign students, especially nationality groups); avenues of communication (student newspapers, centralized bulletin boards, etc.); campus facilities for extra-curricular and leisure-time activities.

THE COMMUNITY: size and nature; proximity to institution; relationship between community and institution; nature of cooperation; roles and tradition of community volunteers in the foreign student program; extent of inclusion of interested American students in group or individual hospitality programs.

Step 2: Evaluation of Current Campus Practices and Programs

An important part of assessing the situation at hand is a review and evaluation of current campus practices and programs that relate, directly or indirectly, to American-foreign student relationships. This should include not only a cataloguing of the kinds and numbers of student groups or organizations or all-campus activities that constitute international activity on the campus, but also an interpretation of their scope — what kind of group is attracted, how diverse or exclusive a group is it, is the structure formal or loose, are activities regular or occasional, does the group observe or participate — *and the needs that each group meets.*

Equally significant are established campus practices that may not appear to be relevant to considerations in American-foreign student relationships but

may, in fact, affect the opportunity for cross-cultural association. Patterns in housing, rooming, and dining facilities, availability of centrally located and equally accessible facilities for relaxation, conversation, leisure time activities, games and athletics, among others, are important to the chance for interaction.

An evaluation of current campus practices and programs involves taking stock of both resources and gaps and requires both realistic and imaginative thinking. Through discussion with others, the Foreign Student Adviser should be able to develop an overview of the strengths and weaknesses that describe the particular situation, and, from there, know better what level of programming can be successfully undertaken.

Step 3: Determining the Level of Programming

The basic *objective* in "programming" in American-foreign student relationships is to create opportunities for experiences that will lead to a gradual re-examination of attitudes and re-conceiving of ideas. The *method* of "programming" should be one of indirection characterized by: (1) a *broad selection* of programs and activities; (2) a *reason* for each program; (3) *voluntary* participation; (4) an *involvement* of the individual; (5) *continuity;* and (6) *follow-up.* The greater the involvement of the students themselves, with assistance and support from the Foreign Student Adviser, the more self-generating the "process" becomes. There are a number of steps, however, that the Foreign Student Adviser can take to help move the process along.

STARTING WITH ORIENTATION

If the initial orientation programs for new American and foreign students are run separately (with orientation for foreign students usually preceding orientation for American students by a day or more), each program could include a brief presentation by the Foreign Student Adviser, or any other appropriate individual, on the opportunities for inter-cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding available within the institutional setting by reason of the international student body and activities. The presentation could be geared to the respective audiences in terms of both content and approach.*

If the orientations are combined or overlapped, a slight shift in the focus and emphasis of the presentation would accomplish essentially the same thing. In such a case, a team of veteran foreign and American student leaders might prove very helpful in presenting both the American student and foreign student points of view.

So that the impact is not lost, consideration might be given to putting the highlights of the message into a written form, to be distributed to each student at the close of the session.**

WORKING WITH ESTABLISHED CAMPUS GROUPS

Encouraging established campus groups which already have or could log-

*Cf. *Guideline* on "Initial Orientation," page 7.

**The brochure, "Cross-Cultural Understanding," might be used. Directions for quantity orders are given in the pocket materials. The FACT SHEET describes other ways by which selected institutions involve American students with foreign students in programs of orientation and continuing assistance. The *Guideline* on "Interpretation of the United States to Foreign Students" also suggests ways to involve foreign and American students in programs of on-going orientation.

ically develop an international dimension to their activities to work together and with the Foreign Student Adviser has two important values: (1) it *utilizes* particular interests within a unified framework; (2) it *meshes* "foreign" and "American" outlooks through coordinated, combined, or complimentary programming. Helping leaders of established groups to see the values of international interests, programs, groups, and activities as a *total entity* assists them in dealing with one another. They, in turn, can assist one another in dealing with counterparts, passing the concept through leadership to other individuals. This is particularly important if a significant number of nationality clubs exist on campus and have tended to isolate the foreign student.

Promoting the concept of "total entity" in international programming is the first and most critical reason why the Foreign Student Adviser should devise some kind of communications channel, whether it is in the form of a fairly well structured "council" or "committee" of student representatives of campus groups, or through informal outreach. The second reason is to give the Foreign Student Adviser a degree of coordination over the proliferation of activities. Assisting each group to assess its special place and role in the international activities of the campus helps to concentrate available resources where each can function best.

WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS

Individuals with an interest in international programming, whether they are students, faculty, colleagues in administration, or community persons, are another important resource in the development of American-foreign student relationships.* Assistance in identifying individuals with potential interest might come through the central channel for student groups, through the original group that considered goals and included representation from other areas of student personal work, or through the Advisory Committee. *If* the numbers of new foreign students do not preclude it, another way to identify individual interest might be an "interest inventory" questionnaire or form.**

As in the case of working with established groups, the Foreign Student Adviser's major job is to help interested individuals become sensitive to the subtleties involved in cross-cultural associations and to excite their interest in expanding the level of awareness of their fellow students, both through promoting greater personal involvement in programs and through increasing individual personal contact with foreign students.

ACCEPTING LIMITATIONS

Limitations to programming designed to strengthen American-foreign student relationships may arise out of: (1) restricted institutional facilities; (2) the budget available for certain programs; (3) the amount of time people have to contribute in light of competing interests and obligations, particularly academic work.

With respect to the foreign students themselves, some thought should be given to the special difficulties they face, such as: (1) difficulty with the English language; (2) adjustment to the new environment; (3) adapting their habits of establishing friendships to new and unfamiliar patterns. The regular

*Especially important is the potential contribution of American students who have had some kind of international experience or exposure (Peace Corps, Experiment in International Living, American Field Service). Cf. pocket materials for a special statement on the returned Peace Corps volunteer.

**Cf. pocket materials.

services that the institution provides to its foreign students will answer some of these needs. Differences in age, level of study, maturity, sophistication, attitudes, and concerns of the foreign and American students involved should also be considered. Recognition of the possible influence that these limitations or considerations could have on cross-cultural associations may help to make programming more realistic. It might be that some programs could be designed to help foreign students overcome such limitations.*

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Developing a "framework" within which programming in the area of American-foreign student relationships can be carried on is the necessary organizational part of the process. Creating actual opportunities and watching how they work are the measure of how useful the framework really is.

The possibilities are as limitless as the institution's resources and facilities, and individuals' interest and willingness to cooperate. But the logical place to begin is *within* the facilities that *already* exist. Experiences reported by institutions suggest that the most significant associations between foreign and American students occur within the context of a natural, informal, unstructured situation where the persons involved "happen" to be together, where a special effort or allocation of their time is not required. How the institution uses its own facilities and how the students use their regular, everyday time should be given *priority* consideration in developing opportunities for cross-cultural contact.

USING FACILITIES

Housing

The way in which foreign students are housed has an immediate effect on the chances for association. Institutions which have adequate on-campus housing for all students and require foreign students to live on-campus for at least part of their stay have a different set of conditions to work with than institutions which must deal with a chronic housing shortage problem that makes it almost impossible to prevent the segregation of foreign students into off-campus cultural colonies.

Where additional housing facilities are already projected, the Foreign Student Adviser might be able to suggest ways by which housing plans could expand opportunities for American-foreign student contact and involvement. Where no expansion of facilities is currently contemplated, the Foreign Student Adviser might still be able to offer suggestions for better utilization of existing facilities, with only minor modifications in planning. Possibilities include:**

1. "International unit" within a given residence hall (a block of rooms, an entire floor, or a whole wing of a building): usually for *undergraduate* students, with the proportion of foreign students ranging from not less than 20% to not more than 50%; preferably by *voluntary* sign-up and screening of American students; additional "programming" done by students directly involved and open to students outside the unit as desired and feasible.

*Cf. FACT SHEET and page 9 for specific examples.

**All examples given to illustrate the special use of facilities in creating opportunities for cross-cultural associations are actual experiences or experiments; further information available from the Field Service Program or FACT SHEET.

2. "Independent co-op": usually for American and foreign *graduate* students in varying ratios; student-run and maintained; single rooms and common lounges; optional common eating facilities.

Studies that have been made on the subject of housing and how it affects American-foreign student relationships predictably agree that environmental proximity is a significant factor in the encouragement of such relationships.* Two common findings are: (1) that foreign students with American roommates under any circumstances (on or off campus housing) have more association with Americans generally than foreign students without American roommates; (2) that any residence unit with a common lounge, dining facilities, library or reading rooms provides a better chance for association between American and foreign students.

Certainly the American-foreign student roommate system has much to be said for it, at least for undergraduate students. Its potential can be increased if the Foreign Student Adviser, in cooperation with the residence hall director or counselors, can provide new American and foreign roommates with informal orientation to the experience of living with a person from another culture.** Veteran foreign and American roommate teams might also be asked to assist.

A Place to Gather

For institutions which simply do not have the opportunity of planning new residences, modifying existing ones, or reaching a large number of foreign students and their American roommates in special orientation sessions, it might still be possible to provide some place for foreign and American students to gather.† Even within the framework of limited facilities, space can be *found* or *created*, without resorting to a contrived or false situation. An example of each:

1. an "International Lounge" in the student union: strategically located (near a cafeteria and a game room), with corners for conversation; an area with card tables and chairs and a chess board; a large collection of magazines and periodicals from all over the world; radio and record player; display cabinets.
2. a "coffee house" on the campus: converted from an abandoned workshop; manned entirely by student volunteers; recorded jazz and folk music, to create a comfortable, easy atmosphere that attracts students of diverse backgrounds and ideas; self-supporting, non-profit, solvent, and successful.

Eating Facilities

Where all students eat together in regular college or university dining halls, possibilities include: (1) a (weekly) "intercultural dialogues" table; (2) a "mealtime language assistance" table (as often as needed).‡

Where special facilities are available (an international or foreign student center, clubhouse, etc.), a possibility is: a weekday "international eating ad-

*Cf. Bibliography. The mature foreign graduate student may be the exception.

**The brochure, "Cross-Cultural Understanding," might be useful here.

†Information on "International Houses" and "International Centers" is included in the FACT SHEET on "Housing" (G-6).

‡Cf. p. 9.

venture" (luncheon or dinner); sponsored by some on-campus club (International Students Club or nationality groups), and using student volunteers; opportunity for spontaneous discussion afterwards; occasionally, a speaker; expenses met by charging for the cost of the meal.

The Classroom and Academic Associations

It is recognized that, at many institutions, it may be difficult for the Foreign Student Adviser to interest faculty in utilizing the classroom situation and adapting teaching techniques to promote greater interaction between American and foreign students. At many institutions, however, Foreign Student Advisers are finding it entirely possible and appropriate to enlist faculty support for such ideas as: (1) involving foreign students in classroom discussions through "comparative" presentations; (2) permitting special study assignments that team American and foreign students in cooperative projects.

Some Foreign Student Advisers have been able to draw upon their personal contacts within the faculty.* Others have used the avenue of the Advisory Committee, which should include some key faculty, to create interest. Inviting selected foreign and American students to express their opinions and make suggestions to the Committee could reinforce the basic position.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING

The size of the institution and numbers of students, foreign and American, do not particularly determine whether additional programming in the area of American-foreign student relationships is desirable or not. Smallness of either institutional size or numbers of foreign students may, in some cases, be a very great advantage in programming, allowing development of certain opportunities or special use of campus facilities that would not be feasible at large institutions with high enrollments of both foreign and American students. It is the quality rather than the amount of contact that is important.

Several suggested "rules of thumb" for additional programming:

1. A program should provide some kind of unique situation or experience that does not exist in any other place or way on the campus.
2. A program should have a basis for involvement, built around a shared or common interest of those who participate.
3. Programs should be developed with some thought to their sequence and timing; certain kinds of "intercultural" activities or discussions require extensive preparation or sophistication on the part of both foreign and American student participants; those which do not require extensive verbalization (sports, games, outings) are often better "openers" and are more enjoyable for new foreign students.

SELECTED EXAMPLES: A SELECTIVE REPORT**

1. "Intercultural Dialogues": a group of foreign and American students meet voluntarily once a week to learn to analyze their own culture

*The leaflet, "The Foreign Student in Your Classroom," by Clara L. Simerville, sent with the *Guideline* on "Academic and Personal Advising," could be used for this purpose.

**Again, all examples are genuine except those which are "categories" of activity rather than specific programs. The FACT SHEET carries additional information about other campus-based educational and cross-cultural programs; the interested reader is urged to contact the person or institution named for further details.

and to develop techniques of cross-cultural presentation; monitored by the Foreign Student Adviser.

2. "Tension Studies": open-ended investigation of a specific problem area in international relations (e.g., Arab-Israeli) by both members of the countries in question and other interested participants; an inter-institutional venture; monitored by a university chaplain.
3. "Talker's Corner": a program designed to involve American and foreign students in casual conversation at mealtimes (table set aside) and to provide foreign students with informal assistance in conversational English; American students act as both participants and tutors*; discussion includes how different cultures use language, what constitutes humor and how it is expressed, what the non-verbal gestures of communication are in different cultures, what the variations are to indicate status, address, and salutation.
4. "The Dating System": dialogue-skits acted out by both veteran foreign and American students and *newly arrived* foreign students to show comparative dating customs and to help new foreign students understand general patterns and meaning of dating relationships as they operate on the campus.
5. "International Drama Festival": a presentation of a foreign playwright's material, with a mix of foreign and American students in the cast; sponsored by the Drama Club.
6. "International Folk Sing": a quarterly activity of the International Student Activities Committee, a sub-committee of student government.
7. International Sports Program: soccer, table-tennis, chess, etc.

FOREIGN GRADUATE STUDENTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

Foreign graduate students will be unlike both foreign undergraduate and American undergraduate students in their expectations and needs in personal relationships and associations. Many foreign graduate students find that "cultural differences" play a far less significant role in relationships with American students than do differences in age, marital status, and level of study. Graduate students, foreign and American, are usually less inclined to restrict themselves to associations only with other students and only on the campus. Mature graduate students from other countries, many of them married and living off campus, need associations with people of similar age, maturity, and interests.

Much of the contact can and does develop spontaneously out of their professional training or area of academic specialization, the various professional fraternities or clubs that exist to bring together individuals who share particular interests, or their housing arrangements, and then carries over into a community of interest outside the formal learning situation. Often the residential community is more directly involved with foreign graduate students and provides more sources of relaxation and diversion.

If the Foreign Student Adviser works routinely with a community and/or faculty committee, this is the logical channel for considering what, if anything, should be done for the foreign graduate student.

*This is *not* a substitute for formal instruction in English as a foreign language.

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

Some joint programming might be attractive to institutions located within reasonably close range of one another, particularly if there are similar limitations in terms of numbers of interested foreign and American students or restricted campus and community resources. Among the possibilities are:

1. inter-institutional sports or other recreational events;
2. combined social events (promoted and facilitated through a joint committee of American and foreign students from the participating institutions, assisted by the Foreign Student Advisers);
3. rotating seminars on other cultures;
4. exchange of ideas about campus organizations and programs;
5. special interest groups (combined drama clubs, for example);
6. inter-institutionally sponsored vacation hospitality, or trips for American and foreign students.

Cooperative ventures have the advantage of multiplying talents, interest, and facilities. They may also reduce whatever costs are involved, permitting a wider range of opportunities than the institution working alone could afford.

CONCLUSION

A good American-foreign student relationships program is a significant ingredient and dimension of a good foreign student program. It is also a reliable measure of the seriousness with which the institution takes its commitment to the international education of both the foreign students it admits and of the American student body.

However gradual the process of developing and strengthening American-foreign student relationships may have to be, the steps taken to promote and expand the basic objective will need constant re-evaluation and adjustment to new attitudes and conditions. It is one of the most promising areas of international educational exchange, and one of the more challenging for those involved in foreign student advising.

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